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A black and white photograph of a man standing outdoors. He is wearing a light-colored plaid sport coat over a dark tie and a light-colored shirt. He is also wearing light-colored trousers. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or a large rock. The man is looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

Selecting Men's Sport Coats and Suit Jackets

SELECTING MEN'S SPORT COATS AND SUIT JACKETS

Marilyn Brown*

Men's sport coats and suit jackets are foundations of the male wardrobe. Individual activities and requirements determine the number of suits needed. Because suits are basic to the male's total wardrobe picture, however, it is particularly important to choose each sport coat or suit jacket with appropriateness, flexibility and quality in mind.



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CORRECT SIZE

Sport coats are sized by chest measurement (35 through 44, 46, 48, 50, 52) plus proportioned height.

Height	Sport coat length
5'3"-5'6½"	Short
5'6½"-5'11"	Regular
5'11"-6'2½"	Long
6'2½"-6'4¼"	Extra long

FIT

Fit, in a sport coat or suit jacket, is a combination of overall comfort, appearance and attention to cut and styling details.

The collar should hug the back of the neck with about ½ inch of the shirt collar showing above the coat collar.

When buttoned, the coat should fit smoothly across the shoulders and not pull at buttons across the chest.

Coat length varies with different body proportions. All coats, however, should cover the seat of the trousers. The "rule of thumb" applies here: the jacket bottom should be even with the thumb when the hand is at the side.

Sleeve lengths should allow ½ to ¾ inch of the shirt cuff to show. Sleeves should be fuller at the shoulder and taper slightly toward the cuff. Sleeves that are too wide and full can be just as cumbersome as baggy pants. Press sleeves with a crease.

Armholes should be comfortable and not bind or feel tight under the arms. Swing arms in all directions to determine if the coat permits freedom of arm movement.

V-shaped lapels should lie flat against the shirt and end in a soft roll at the top coat button.

The bottom of the coat should always be parallel to the floor all the way around when the jacket is buttoned.

WORKMANSHIP

Look to see that all patterned fabrics—stripes, checks and plaids—are matched at center back and side seams as well as across front welts, flaps and pockets.

Buttonholes and buttons. Buttonholes should be closely stitched, key-shaped and bar-tacked. Buttons should be securely attached with an adequate shank. All threads should be fastened and clipped.

Vents and pockets. Vents (a slit in the coat back which is an opening in the lower part of the hem seam) and pocket flaps (the fabric piece which hangs free over the pocket) should be lined with the fabric used in the coat lining. Coat pockets should be lined with a loosely woven, cotton twill fabric.

Lapels. Grasp the coat front lapel and pull your closed hand down its length. The lapel should feel lightweight and soft, yet spring back into shape when released.

Sleeves. Sleeves should be set on-grain to the body of the coat so the sleeve front folds come to the middle of the pockets.

Inner fabrics. Wrinkles on inside fabrics (between the lining and outer fabric) mean that the inside fabrics have not been stitched down and may bunch or sag during cleaning. Roll a corner of the collar up and forward. If a good quality underlining is used, the collar will slip back into place. If it turns back slowly, the interlining contains starch and will cause the collar to soften with wear and cleaning.

Lining. A full lining should cover all inside seams, but a $\frac{3}{8}$ lining should cover all shoulder areas, the top half of the back and both sides of the front. All exposed seam edges should be turned and stitched or bound for added neatness and strength. A $\frac{3}{8}$ lining provides comfort to the wearer and gives body and shape to the shoulder area. It gives the coat strength only where it is needed and makes alterations easier.

A small, horizontal pleat for ease in body movement should be left in the chest portion of the back lining and along the bottom edge of back linings in fully lined coats. Armholes and the back of an under collar should be handstitched.



FASHION DETAILS

The type of jacket lapel, the jacket length, pocket style and vents are some design details manipulated by designers to blend with current body styles. Fashion in pocket styles vary with different pocket shapes. Vents change in length and placement from the center back to the sides of a coat.

The great variety of details currently used in menswear gives consumers a wide selection.

Select lapel width and lines on the basis of what is most becoming to the man:

- Narrow lapels are more becoming to the round or broad, full face.
- Wider lapels are best for the long, slender face.
- Lapels on 2-button, single-breasted garments have long diagonal lines which tend to lengthen the face shape.
- Lapels on 3-button, single-breasted garments have short diagonal lines which tend to shorten the face shape.
- Lapels on double-breasted garments have cross-over lines which tend to add width to the face.

FABRIC

One of your first considerations in selecting a coat or jacket is the fabric. Is it firmly woven? Does it wrinkle? These are two important questions in judging the quality of a suiting fabric.

Wool tailors easily and beautifully, holds its shape and resists wrinkles.

Silk, frequently used in blends, gives suits a luxurious look. Expense limits its use.

Cotton, as an absorbent fiber, makes a cool and comfortable fabric for hot, humid weather. Because cotton wrinkles and soils easily, however, special wrinkle-resistant and soil-resistant finishes are often required. Cotton is frequently blended with man-made fibers.

Linen is naturally absorbent and attractive in textured weaves. Because it is not resilient and wrinkles easily, however, linen requires a wrinkle-resistant finish. It is frequently combined with wool or mohair for added resilience.

Rayon, acrylic and polyester are major man-made suiting fibers. Usually they are blended with other fibers. Polyester is blended with man-made and naturals more than any other synthetic. However, 100 percent polyester is popular for knit suits due to its comfort and easy care characteristics. Rayon, an inexpensive fiber, lowers the cost of a suit. Because rayon wrinkles easily, however, it is used mainly in blends. Although acrylics are used to give the feel of wool, they are not widely used in men's suits.

Aesthetics and life-style determine a man's need for wool, cotton, silk, linen, synthetics or blends. Many men own a combination of fabrics in their wardrobes to meet their needs ranging from casual to elegant.

FABRIC CONSTRUCTION

Until recently, all suit fabrics were either plain or twill weaves. Knits recently have expanded the variety of men's suiting fabrics. Whether the fabric is woven or knitted, look for firm fabric construction that will be durable, keep its shape and hold a press.

Recent entries on the fabric market are stretch woven fabrics which use a texturized fiber in the warp or the filling of a fabric. The fabric is woven but also has a stretch quality. Stretch woven fabrics are comfortable, durable and moisture absorptive with interesting surface textures. A garment made of stretch yarns will return to its original state when tension is released.

Fabric weight. The current trend is toward lightweight suits. A smooth fabric feels cooler than a rough-textured one. Look for a porous fabric, one in which light shows through. These spaces between yarns provide ventilation.

On-grain. Lengthwise yarns are perpendicular to crosswise yarns when a fabric is on-grain. Suits with on-grain fabrics will maintain their shape through wearing and cleaning.

TOTAL EFFECT

A man's total appearance is judged, in part, by the neatness and crispness of his sport coat or suit jacket and by its fit. A sport coat or suit jacket which is in fashion, well-fitted and neat creates a good impression and contributes to a man's comfort and self-assurance.

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